

# Overview of Public Health in Michigan

## What is Public Health?

Public health addresses the health of the whole population, as compared to medical health care, which focuses on treatment of the individual ailment. According to the Institute of Medicine, the mission of public health is defined as "fulfilling society's interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy."

## 10 Great Public Health Achievements (1900-1999)

- **Vaccination** has resulted in the eradication of smallpox; elimination of poliomyelitis in the Americas; and control of measles, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, Haemophilus influenza type b, and other infectious diseases in the United States.
- **Motor Vehicle Safety** has reduced fatal injuries through improved engineering, safer highways and changes in personal behavior.
- **Safer workplaces** have resulted in a 40% reduction in fatal occupational injuries through greater knowledge of risks and control of exposure.
- **Control of infectious diseases** has resulted from cleaner drinking water and improved sanitation the first half of the century, as well as the discovery of antibiotics.
- **Decline in deaths from heart disease and stroke** the second half of the century have resulted from risk factor reduction (e.g., smoking, high blood pressure) coupled with improved access to early detection and treatment.
- **Safer and healthier foods** have resulted from a decrease in microbial contamination and increases in nutritional content early in the century; food fortification programs have nearly eliminated major nutritional deficiency diseases in the United States.
- **Healthier mothers and babies** have resulted from better hygiene and nutrition, access to healthcare and technologic advances. *Since 1900, infant and maternal mortality has decreased by 90%.*
- **Family planning and contraceptive services** have allowed for greater planning of childbirth and a reduction in sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Fluoridation of drinking water** benefits children and adults by preventing tooth decay and reducing tooth loss, regardless of access to care or socioeconomic status.
- **Recognition of tobacco as a health hazard** has resulted in changes in social norms to prevent onset of smoking and promote cessation. Since the U.S. Surgeon General's report in 1964 on the risks of smoking, the prevalence among adults has decreased.

## **Michigan Public Health Code**

Act 368 of 1978 stipulates that each county must have a city, county, or district health department. A local health department shall continually and diligently endeavor to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote the public health through organized programs, including:

- Prevention and control of environmental health hazards
- Prevention and control of diseases
- Prevention and control of health problems of particularly vulnerable population groups
- Development of health care facilities and health services delivery systems
- Regulation of health care facilities and health services delivery systems to the extent provided by law

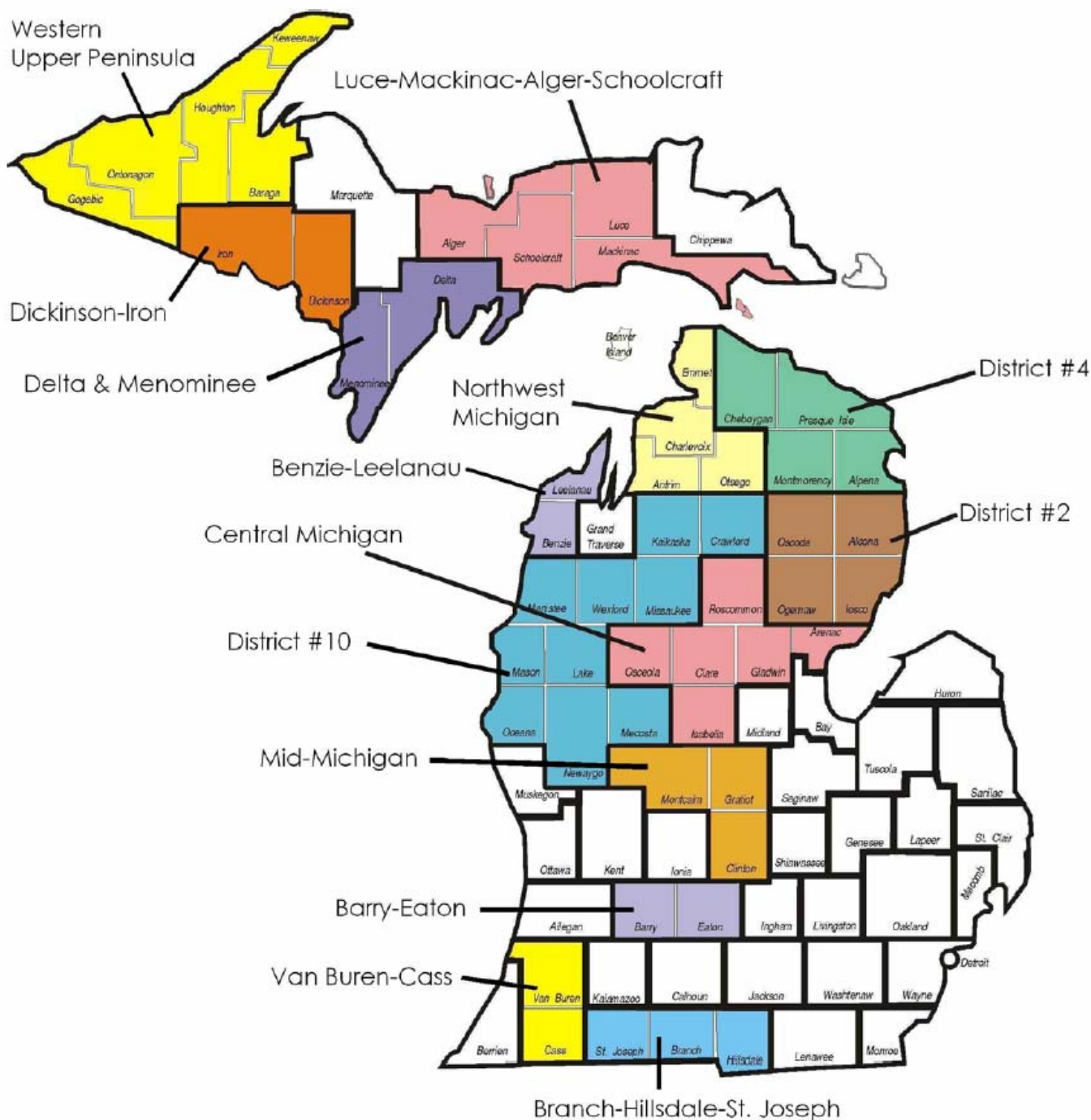
A local health department shall: *(summarized)*

- Implement and enforce laws regarding local health.
- Utilize vital and health statistics for the purpose of protecting the public health.
- Make investigations and inquiries as to the causes of disease, morbidity and mortality, and especially of epidemics.
- Plan, implement, and evaluate health education.
- Plan, implement, and evaluate nutrition services.

## **Michigan's Public Health Departments**

See page 3 for a map of Michigan's 45 local health departments.

# Michigan Local Health Departments



MDCH Local Health Services  
Updated November 2005